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The Cuban Crisis

Prior to the crisis, the DCS/Intelligence, this headquarters, provided the Commander, his staff, and subordinate units with significant items on Cuba whenever the situation was not overshadowed by events in the normal sphere of Thirteenth Air Force operations--Southeast Asia. However, following President Kennedy's announcement on 22 October 1962 of the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, the following actions were taken: ¹¹⁸

23 October - When the JCS established DEFCON 3 at 2300Z, all units of this command were instructed to assume the readiness posture and report when the status was achieved. ¹¹⁹ ... defensive forces attained DEFCON 3 status at 0001Z; offensive forces attained the SIOP (Single Integrated Operating Procedure) posture at 0130Z. ¹²⁰ ...reconnaissance forces in Southeast Asia continued special missions directed by COM-USMACV and the Commander, Thirteenth Air Force...staffs at all echelons of this command met to review contingency and war plans. ¹²¹

1 November - Headquarters, PACAF relieved this command of the requirement to maintain flyable aircraft on ground alert status. Routine training was resumed.

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28 November - DEFCON 4 was declared in effect at 0640Z.(S)

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I don't think that we expected that he (Khrushchev) would put the missiles in Cuba, because it would have seemed such an imprudent action for him to take, as it was later proved. Now, he obviously must have thought that he could do it in secret, and the United States would accept it.

Although the role played by Thirteenth Air Force during the Cuban crisis was minor, the comments thereafter by General Curtis E. LeMay, Chief of Staff, USAF, were appreciated by this command, engaged as it was with a day-to-day crisis across the South China Sea. 123